

## Progress continues to be made toward equality for women in Ontario

By Teresa Piruzza  
Minister Responsible  
for Women's Issues

International Women's Week is an opportunity for Ontarians to focus on strengthening the role of women in our society. From March 2 to 8, the spotlight is on women and the advances we have made toward full equality around the world and here in Ontario. This year, the United Nations' theme for International Women's Day March 8 is "Equality for women is progress for all." During this week, the Ontario Women's Directorate will celebrate the progress women have made through strong leadership. Celebrations will take place in communities across Ontario, with participation from women's groups, secondary schools, post-secondary institutions and businesses.

As Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, I am proud that for 30 years the directorate has played an important role in effecting and influencing change for women here in Ontario. We have worked to champion the achievements and leadership of women across the province. And again this year, we are honouring 106 women and girls through the Leading Women, Leading Girls Recognition Program for their contributions to improving the lives of others.

While we can acknowledge with certainty that progress has been made in having a female Premier, barriers remain that prevent more women from becoming leaders. We must work together to tear those barriers down.

Our government believes gender equality and a stronger economy go hand-in-hand. That is why over the past year we have worked toward increasing the representation of women on boards and in senior management positions. Through roundtables across Ontario, we have engaged businesses and community leaders to talk about women's economic empowerment.

And we are seeing more women on boards, in politics and in non-traditional jobs.

Since 2012, more than 300 women have received training in the skilled trades and information technology through our Women In Skilled Trades and Information Technology program. Over the next two years, 600 low-income women will be trained to start and run their own businesses through our Microlending Program.

Three decades after the creation of the Ontario Women's Directorate, there is visible progress and we will continue to work towards full equality for women.

I encourage everyone to take part in community activities to celebrate this year's International Women's Week. When we strengthen equality for women, we all become stronger.